

NEWS Release

For Immediate Release

Topic: Tobacco Summit offers best practices in tobacco prevention
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Participants in the state's first Tobacco Summit aim to have additional defenses against tobacco use by Mississippians when they leave this week's day-and-a-half summit.

Health officials, policy makers, and members of advocacy groups from throughout Mississippi will hear what works in tobacco policy and prevention from some of the country's most respected thinkers in the field.

"This summit is a major step toward Mississippi's having a consistent and comprehensive plan to combat tobacco use," said State Health Officer Dr. Ed Thompson. "Policy consistency in all categories — from individual behavior choices to environmental tobacco concerns — are vital for a successful plan to reduce tobacco-related illnesses in adults and to prevent the use of tobacco by our children."

Hosted by the Mississippi State Board of Health, the May 23-24 working summit in Jackson features both break-out sessions and panel discussions.

Wick Warren, Ph.D., from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, will share his expertise gained through 20 years at the CDC. The statistician and demographer with the Office on Smoking and Health will lead the "Health Consequences and Mississippi Prevalence" session.

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"In 1998, the CDC developed the Youth Tobacco Surveillance System to help states develop and maintain their state-based tobacco prevention and control surveillance and evaluation systems," he said.

"Mississippi, with the policy guidance of the Department of Health, has been one of the leaders in the development of the survey which is a vital component of the system. Now, Youth Tobacco Surveillance data are being used by many health and education officials to improve national and state youth tobacco prevention and control programs," Warren said.

Other summit leaders include: Letitia Daniels, southern regional advocacy representative for Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids; Dr. Corinne Husten, branch chief of epidemiology at the CDC; Dr. Arthur Cosby, director and research fellow of Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center; Matt Myers, president and chief executive officer of the National Center for Tobacco Free Kids in Washington, D.C.; Phillip Wilbur, director of tobacco control projects for ROW Sciences in Washington, D.C.; Dr. Pat Cooper, superintendent of schools in the McComb School District; and David Hampton, editorial director, The Clarion-Ledger.

Approximately 150 people are at the summit. Additional information on the Department of Health's tobacco prevention efforts can be found at <http://www.msdh.state.ms.us/tobacco/index.html>